

# CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Jeff Merkley, and Brian Schatz

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## Climate Change is a Culprit in Decline of Minnesota Walleye



Lake Mille Lacs resort owners are angry, anglers are frustrated, and they all have an opinion on what's to blame for the shocking decline in walleye in Minnesota's favorite fishing destination. But there's one culprit getting increased attention: global warming. Tullibee, a cold-water loving fish that is a critical prey for walleye, is largely gone from Mille Lacs. In fact, tullibee is in trouble across the state — a clear sign that Minnesota's lakes are changing as fast as the climate and creating an uncertain future for the state's prized fishing industry. By the end of this century, tullibee will be gone or drastically reduced in two-thirds of the lakes where it lives now, according to a climate model used by state and University of Minnesota scientists. Other coldwater fish like yellow perch, burbot and lake trout are also declining, while warmwater fish like bluegill and crappies are on the rise. "It's a pretty striking story," said Peter Jacobson, a fish biologist with the state Department of Natural Resources. He's been studying tullibee since heat-related fish kills first got his attention in the hot summer of 2006. "The recent declines have been mostly from climate." ([Minneapolis Star Tribune](#))

## EPA's Curbs on Carbon Will Save Thousands of Lives

The Obama administration's proposed curbs on coal-burning power plants could prevent about 3500 deaths each year from heart attack and respiratory disease, scientists said Monday in the first peer-reviewed study to examine the measure's health impacts. Many parts of the country could see immediate improvements in air quality as a side-effect of the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed "Clean Power Plan" standards, according to the study published in *Nature Climate Change* by scientists from Harvard and Syracuse Universities and four other institutions. Though the standards are primarily intended to cut greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change, this study found that a robust standard — similar to the one proposed by the EPA — would result in substantial, and rapid, improvements in air quality. The most significant gains, the report said, would occur in states including Texas and Ohio. ([Washington Post](#))

## Climate Change is an Extinction Threat to 1 in 6 Species

Climate change could drive to extinction as many as one in six animal and plant species, according to a new analysis published in the journal *Science*. Dr. Mark Urban, the author and an ecologist at the University of Connecticut, also found that as the planet warms in the future, species will disappear at an accelerating rate. "We have the choice," he said in an interview. "The world can decide where on that curve they want the future Earth to be." Climate Change has raised the planet's average surface temperature about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit since the Industrial Revolution. Species are responding by shifting their ranges. If emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases continue to grow, climate researchers project the world could warm by as much as 8 degrees Fahrenheit by this century's end. As the climate continues to change, scientists fear, some species won't be able to find suitable habitats. As dire as Dr. Urban's conclusions are, other experts said the real toll may turn out to be even worse. The number of extinctions "may well be two to three times higher," said Dr. John J. Wiens, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Arizona. ([NY Times](#))

## U.S. Leading on Climate as Arctic Council Chair

Secretary of State John F. Kerry recently took the helm of the Arctic Council, on behalf of the United States. He vowed to protect the delicate northern environment of the Arctic, which has been newly exposed by melting polar ice to the developed world's quest for energy and a swifter trade route from Europe to Asia. Kerry promised to make the battle against climate change the first priority of the two-year U.S. stewardship of the council, which unites eight countries whose shores rim the Arctic Circle. "The numbers are alarming. The Arctic is warming faster than any other region on Earth," Kerry said. "Temperatures are increasing at more than twice the rate of the global average, which means the resilience of Arctic communities and ecosystems ... in the Arctic is tragically, but actually, in jeopardy." Ocean Conservancy's Whit Sheard, representing a consortium of environmental groups at the council, said he was encouraged by the sense of urgency expressed on the fight against excessive development and the emission of greenhouse gases like black carbon and methane that accelerate rising temperatures. ([LA Times](#))

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Whit Sheard, is located at the bottom right of the page.